

This is a full transcript from the Letters of Mary Nisbet held by the British Museum as opposed to the heavily edited and sanitised version of The Letters of Mary Nisbet in the 1926 book which only published a fraction of what is a damning indictment on Mary's true character. The part published in the 1926 book is highlighted in yellow.

N.B. Elchy means ambassador (Elgin) and Lady Elgin's nick- names for Pisani was Pleasancy. Gibbon could be Edward Gibbon author of "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" whom Elgin had known prior to his Constantinople post? Lady Robert would be Mary's maternal grandmother.

Bouyouk Dérie

My Very Dear Father,

You can have no idea of the pleasure your letter and my Mother's from Athens gave us; You know I was always against the formatori, and I remember you did not admire the idea of them; so I feel the greatest comfort at your aprobation of their work, for after having been at such expence it is certainly very pleasing to hear things are done in so superior and masterly a stile; I really now do not feel to grudge them. Your letter put Elgin into the greatest glee, he was quite charmed at your entering so heartily into his cause; your visit would undoubtedly renovate the Artists and make them work with fresh spirit – Elgin is going immediately to set about getting the proper Firman for Minerva's Temple. I shall write you word if it succeeds.

But now my Dearest Father prepare to hear with extasy what I am going to tell you! The other day E. took it into his head to make Chabert ask the Favourite of the Valida Sultana, Yousouf Aga, for four pieces of porphyry – The one in the sea beyond the Seraglio point, the top of Constantine's Sarcophagus, and the one at the gate of the Old Seraglio which being broken is considered as two. The answer given led to a great deal of negotiation at the Porte, and various refusals were given, "it being quite impossible to touch any thing belonging to the Seraglio etc., etc." Till at last Pisani came bo-owing one

morning with a little specimen of porphyry which the Porte offered to give E: if he chose it: Upon which the Great Elchy-Bey took the bit out of Pleasancy's hand & without even condescending to look at the little innocent échantillon, chucked it out of the window, saying that he would have all or none, & that since they knew how to refuse him such a trifle as a few bits of Red Stone! he would take the hint upon the many various favours they were just now asking him!!! This had the desired effect, Pisani in a fright flew out of the room. I do not know whether he did not leave his calpack behind him: But sure it is the next day Yousouf sent to say he had asked the Grand Segnior's leave for the pieces of porphyry & sure it is that Selim said it was too trifling a thing to refuse his Beloved Friend Elchy-Bey, there was a modification however from the impossibility of touching anything from the precinct of a Mosque, therefore they could not give him the Top of the Sarcophagus, but offered in lieu of it another piece that was within the Seraglio.

The matter now stands thus.- Captain Briggs Commander of the Salamine Brig has at this moment on board, one piece of porphyry 4 foot & a half long, & 3 foot & ½ round.

Another 5 foot long, & 3 ½ round;

Another 7 foot & a half long, & 3 ½ round.

And another - Open Your Eyes!

Eight foot long & seven feet round!!!

Pon honor fact, Dear Sir!-

But as no human success is perfect, the Salamine Brig being so deep in the water, has been under the cruel necessity after many fruitless attempts with the aid of the great sheers of the Arsenal; to abandon the idea of taking the fifth piece, being a Column of Twelve foot long and about two foot diameter, which is now in the Dock Yard awaiting some other conveyance.

What say you to this Dearest Dad? -

Gibbon would have said Elgin had coaxed or bullied Old Selim out of these bits of Red Stone.

I hope this letter will not be lost, as I shall forget the dimensions, which I wrote down on purpose to send you. But do not think I am so elated with my success as to forget your piece of grey granite, or a piece of the red Oriental Granite, the latter I know not where to find, but I will enquire.

Elgin is going to send off tonight, I have not time to write to my Mother, and indeed I have nothing new to say as I sent a long letter to her the 10th of June and directed it to the care of Lord Minto. I shall do the same with this, as I think he will take care of them.

Hamilton is going to Egypt in the Brig which is to sail, the first fair wind, the Captain will be a great loss for he is a smart pleasant young Beau and an admirer of Caroline.

I wish you could see Bruce toddling away by himself, he is an amazing treat, he is growing rather passionate he can put himself into a fury and hollow most lustily, without greeting.

Do you approve of that?

We intend to go to Belgrade tomorrow to spend a few weeks, - Tell my Mother I have just been writing to Grosvenor Sq: to tell them Mr. Hunt's news about you and that I have sent her letter to Lady Robert.

Elgin desires his best love he will write soon to you, but begs you will excuse him tonight as he is most completely faged, he has been working like a slave for these three days past. He is going on quite comfortably without any Discomposturas.

Your dutiful and most affectionate  
Daughter,  
M. Elgin

June 14th 1801

&

2 o'clock in ye morning of ye 15th of June.

The thermometer today was above 90 in the sun & 80 in the shade. [In vertical text]